

Dear Jim,

Baker- The Man and the Myth?

3/24/74

Time was when my thinking time was my driving time, between home and New York and home and Washington. Then my walking time became my thinking time. Until the gun law made a real walk too hazardous. Today it was outside-work time. A long hard day of it sandwiching Baker on Face the Nation.

With the outside work to be done and a strong sun on a near-freezing day, I did enjoy it and afterward I did think of Baker. Not concentratedly enough to let the machete slip again, though! Which is pretty good on the machete end, considering all that I did with it, for several hours.

So was not not thinking of Baker 100% of the time.

It seems to me that he is an extraordinarily subtle man with Thespian capabilities Our Glorious Leader never dreamed of. He comes across as the sincerest man in the world, with a trace of agony in the face and the inflections, a deep and worried concern in the manner and emphasis, so that his really overt defense of Nixon is entirely lost. This is a very dangerous man because he is skilled as Nixon is not, subtle as Nixon can't be, with a good vocabulary, which Nixon lacks, and a genuineness close examination of his words will, I believe, demonstrate is fraud.

My impression of his today's performance is that it was virtuoso.

My belief is that as soon as he knew it was scheduled there was The Anderson Leak on CIA.

(And what this amounts to, in fact and in his representation, has to be nothing. Absolutely nothing.)

There are key words and concepts Baker uses over and over again. In the present they make him appear reasonable and concerned. In the future they can have other meanings. Examples: "Reasonable" for positions, requests, etc. Who decides? The average viewer has no idea how differently people can and do interpret such words. "Give a little," applied to both sides. Nixon takes a firm and wrong position and to get him to abandon it the side of reason and right has to give him some of what he demands, or retreat from what its obligation requires of it. And what is "a little" in terms of the incriminating evidence can be an enormous amount in terms of the case. The Judiciary committee gives up one-seventh of the tapes it wants. This means six tapes, any one of which can be enough to get ~~apex~~ the Senate to agree to vote impeachment. Or put others in jail. But one-seventh surely is "a little."

After a year of posing the wrong question and situation, Baker now admits not that ~~it~~ is and was wrong but that developments require it be broadened. In doing this he volunteered that there is absolutely no reason to believe that Nixon was in on the deal from the first. And he gets away with it and with this millions of people are misinformed.

These are illustrative only. They are not a complete catalogue. The man is able, has the appearance to go with it, and because he got away with all that dubious stuff on TV when the hearings were televised, he has a reputation as an honest, dedicated, agonizer.

He thus serves his selfish interest, those of his party, and most of all, those of Nixon et al. As he did at the hearings.

He used a phrase that should have Bella, Shirley and Yvonne screaming. To describe the House's concern for its prerogatives, obligations and honor he used the phrase used earlier by others: its manhood.

He is truly Ev Dirksen's true and faithful son-in-law.